

House Republican Press Release

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Transportation Initiative Stopped Dead in Tracks



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There were a considerable number of significant issues that the legislature failed to complete during the recently closed General Assembly session, including campaign finance and ethics reforms and meaningful medical malpractice reform. Chief among them was the complete failure of the state Senate to initiate the Governor's comprehensive Transportation initiative.

At the beginning of the session in January, Governor Rell introduced a significant \$1.3 billion Transportation package which she highlighted as a priority for Connecticut. The transportation problems that have bogged down commuters and tourists on our roadways, railways and bus routes have gone without being meaningfully addressed for far too long.

Governor Rell proposed adding 340 more rail cars to Metro-North, \$187 million in improvements to primary interstates, and \$150 million in improving other state and interstate roadways. She also proposed \$7.5 million on new transit buses.

While traffic grinding to a halt with regularity every morning and evening commute can be very annoying to those trying to get to and from work, the price is greater than mere aggravation. Such gridlock contributes to poor economic conditions in Connecticut as well. Our state's commerce depends heavily on the ability of goods to be shipped to, from, and through our state. Commerce depends on all forms of transportation, and when our transportation system fails, our economy follows.

The plan that was put forth by the Governor was common sense, and it enjoyed bi-partisan support. As the Ranking member of the Transportation Committee of the General Assembly, I co-sponsored the bill, which would implement her plan, and worked alongside the Committee chairs, Rep. Tony Guererra, Senator Billy Ciotto, and fellow Ranking Member Senator John McKinney to usher this important measure through.

Unfortunately, despite overwhelming support from both Republicans and Democrats in the House and Senate, at the eleventh hour of the General Assembly session that concluded June 8th, the Senate's Democratic leaders deliberately blocked the measure in a calculated and disingenuous fashion. Claiming that they also support the Transportation initiative, Senate President Don Williams (D-29) and Senate Majority Leader Martin

Looney (D-11) announced on the final day that the bonding for the package would not be executed without the bonding being approved for the rest of the state budget. In essence, they are holding the final approval of the transportation package hostage until the projects that they want and favor are also approved.

Playing politics with Connecticut's transportation problems does not pass for leadership. During a Special Session of the General Assembly scheduled for June 23rd, the bonding for this initiative will be taken up. I urge Connecticut residents and businesses to contact their legislators to ensure that this measure is acted on. Not only is it critical to easing Connecticut's transportation issues, but it is also vital to the state's long term economic strength and growth.